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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KU](#) [NATIONAL ASSEMBLY](#)  
SUBJECT: MPS SUBMIT NO CONFIDENCE MOTION ON HEALTH MINISTER

REF: A. KUWAIT 195  
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 56  
[1](#)C. 06 KUWAIT 4665

Sensitive But Unclassified; not for Internet distribution.

[1](#)1. (SBU) Shaykh Ahmed Abdullah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Minister of Health and the Amir's nephew, was brought before Parliament February 19 and questioned for ten hours on alleged corruption and mismanagement in his ministry and on the overall deterioration of health services in the country. Significantly, Shaykh Ahmed is the first descendant of Mubarak Al-Kabir, the founder of modern Kuwait, to be "grilled" by Parliament, though not the first Al-Sabah. The three MPs questioning the Minister presented hundreds of documents to support their case, which were highlighted and displayed on the Assembly's two large video screens. The galleries were packed with observers and the overall ambiance of the grilling was cordial. After the marathon session, ten parliamentarians -- not including the three questioning MPs -- submitted a no confidence motion on the Minister, which is scheduled to be voted on March 5. Eight of the ten MPs were part of the 17-member Islamic Bloc in Parliament, as were two of the questioning MPs. The motion needs 25 votes to pass, since Cabinet members, who serve as ex officio MPs, cannot vote on no confidence motions. If passed, Shaykh Ahmed would be the first Minister in the history of Kuwait's parliamentary democracy to be forced to resign from his post by a vote of no confidence. In November, Minister of Information Mohammed Al-Sanousi resigned rather than face a parliamentary grilling.

[1](#)2. (SBU) After the grilling, the Prime Minister said he was proud of this demonstration of "Kuwait's deep-rooted democracy." He also thanked the questioning MPs for presenting their case in a "good manner" and promised to address the problems in the Health Ministry they highlighted. Observers are split over whether the Minister will resign before the March 5 session to avoid a potential ouster, or face the no confidence vote and prevail. One Islamist MP told Poloffs February 12 that he opposed the grilling and did not think a no confidence motion would pass (ref A).

[1](#)3. (SBU) The director of a local pro-reform NGO told LES Political Specialist that the Speaker of Parliament, merchant families, and Salafi Islamists were behind the grilling, which they hoped would force the Prime Minister to reshuffle the Cabinet. According to him, the Speaker, Jassem Al-Khorafi, wanted the Prime Minister to replace the Minister of Commerce, whom he blamed for the recent decision to freeze shares of several Al-Khorafi Group companies over a hostile takeover dispute. The NGO director claimed the Salafi Islamic Grouping's (a conservative political association) target was the State Minister for Cabinet Affairs, Dr. Ismail Al-Shatti, whom the group blamed for the recent decision to cancel a number of government contracts with several leading

Kuwaiti companies, including one in which former Salafi MP Dr. Fahd Al-Khanna had a stake. The NGO director predicted a Cabinet reshuffle prior to the March 5 session.

14. (SBU) Comment: While the NGO director's information cannot be verified, it highlights the complex and often competing interests involved in this grilling, which make predicting the ultimate outcome particularly difficult. Some suggest back room deals may be made to prevent the Minister's forced resignation, which, if it happens, could merely demonstrate the effectiveness of grillings as a means of eliciting Government concessions. Indeed, several MPs have already threatened additional grillings in the near future, suggesting that the tension between the Government and Parliament is unlikely to dissipate any time soon. End comment.

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